

Macedonia participates in multinational exercise to strengthen security in Adriatic

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Nearly 1,500 U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel are participating in a multi-national exercise with Albania and Macedonia, July 11-30, in the Adriatic Sea.

Named *Adriatic Engagement 2005*, the exercise is focused on developing the individual and collective combat proficiencies of participating nations, as well as promoting friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation with NATO and regional allies. A comprehensive agenda will provide all countries with numerous opportunities to operate together and develop productive relationships through diverse and challenging training scenarios.

“Exercises like Adriatic Engagement enable us to be better prepared to pursue productive theater security cooperation efforts that foster mutual commitments to regional stability, advance multinational interoperability, and deter potential adversaries ... all invaluable contributions to the international fight against terrorism,” said U.S. Navy Vice Adm. J. Boomer Stufflebeem, Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet.

Participating U.S. forces include amphibious assault ship USS Saipan (LHA 2), rescue and salvage ship USS Grasp (ARS 51), Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit EIGHT (EODMU 8), Helicopter Support Squadron FOUR (HC 4), Marine Corps Security Force Company Europe, and Commander, Task Force SIX SEVEN (CTF 67).

In addition to providing training ranges, Albania will contribute three infantry platoons, an EOD team, a dive team and helicopter support. Macedonia will participate with a combat engineer platoon and special forces. Training will include field exercises, search-and-rescue and dive scenarios, live fire drills, casualty evacuation rehearsals, maritime interception operations, and small boat attacks.

USS Saipan’s participation also corresponds with the U.S. Navy’s *Global War on Terrorism Surge 05*, demonstrating the Navy’s ability to prepare and provide support to the strategic, regional engagement and operational requirements of Combatant Commanders, delivering scalable naval power and the specific forces necessary to support their mission.

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